Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107
ORIGIN PRS-01

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00
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INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 SP-02 INRE-00 /078 R

DRAFTED BY S/PRS:JORDWAY:LM
APPROVED BY S/PRS:J. ORDWAY
NEA/P:MR. SHERMAN
NEA/ARN: MR. REUTHER
NEA/IAI: MR. SMITH
S/S:R. PERITO
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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE
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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

UNCLAS STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT:EXCERPTS FROM WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING ON CBU'S

NO. 15

1. FOLLOWING ARE REMARKS BY WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY JODY POWELL AT DAILY BRIEFING 2/17 ON SUBJECT OF PRESIDENT'S DECISION AGAINST SUPPLYING CBU'S TO ISRAEL.

MR. POWELL: WE DO HAVE QUITE AN AGENDA HERE. IF WE CAN,AS WE GO THROUGH THESE VARIOUS ITEMS -- AND WE CAN'T -- BUT WE WILL TRY TO FOCUS THE QUESTIONS ON THAT PARTICULAR ITEM AND THE GENERAL THINGS UNTIL WE GET TO THE END OF ALL THIS.

AS I INDICATED TO YOU EARLIER THIS WEEK, WE DO HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT FOR YOU ON A DECISION WITH REGARD TO THE SALE OF CONCUSSION BOMBS AND OTHER ITEMS.

THE DECISION HAS BEEN MADE BY THE PRESIDENT NOT TO SELL CONCUSSION BOMBS TO ISRAEL OR ANY OTHER NATION. THE UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

DECISION SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS DIRECTED TOWARD ISRAEL. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF SELLING THESE WEAPONS TO ANY COUNTRY AND WE ARE, IN FACT, AT THIS TIME REASSESSING THE NEED TO RETAIN THE WEAPONS IN OUR OWN INVENTORY

I MIGHT ADD THAT THE M-60 TANKS AND THE 155 MILLI-METER HOWITZERS WILL BE SOLD AND THAT THE QUESTION OF --

Q. M-60 TANKS?

MR. POWELL: M-60, SIX-ZERO. AND THAT --

Q. SOLD TO ISRAEL?

MR. POWELL: THAT IS CORRECT. THOSE WERE PART OF THE ORIGINAL COMMITMENT.

Q. WERE THERE ANY OTHER OUTSTANDING REQUESTS FROM ANY OTHER COUNTRY FOR THE CONCUSSION BOMBS?

MR. POWELL: THAT I DO NOT KNOW. THAT IS THE BASIS FOR THAT. IF THERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS, I WILL OPEN UP THE FLOOR.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Q. WHAT WAS THE OTHER ITEM? M-60 TANKS AND WHAT?

MR. POWELL: THERE WAS AN ITEM OF 94 155 MILLIMETER HOWITZERS.

Q. HOW MANY TANKS ARE INVOLVED IN THAT?

MR. POWELL: JERRY SAYS HE DOES NOT KNOW.

Q. DO YOU KNOW THE DOLLAR FIGURE ON THIS?

MR. POWELL: NO.
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

Q. WHY WAS A DECISION MADE NOW?

MR. POWELL: THE QUESTION WAS, WHY THE DECISION WAS MADE NOW.

THERE IS NO PARTICULAR FACTOR INVOLVED IN THAT EXCEPT THAT, AS I INDICATED TO YOU EARLIER THIS WEEK, IT WAS NOT OUR FEELING THAT WE SHOULD FOREGO OUR RESPONSIBLITY TO REVIEW THIS PORGRAM. AND OBVIOUSLY WE WANTED TO CONDUCT THAT REVIEW AND REACH A DECISION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. AND THAT HAS BEEN DONE.

IF I MAY INTREPRET WHAT YOU ARE GETTING AT IN TERMS OF THE TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT WITH RELATIONSHIP TO THE DECISION, THE PRESIDENT MADE HIS DECISION EARLY THIS WEEK.

IT WAS HIS FEELING, A FEELING SHARED BY SECRETARY VANCE, THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO INFORM THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT PERSONALLY OF THAT DECISION ON HIS VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST BEFORE AN ANNOUNCE MENT WAS MADE.THAT WAS DONE YESTERDAY AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS BEING MADE TODAY.

Q. JODY, YOU SEEM TO SUGGEST THAT YOU ARE NOT SELLING THIS TO ANY OTHER COUNTRY AND, INDEED, YOU ARE REASSESSING THE NEED TO RETAIN IT IN OUR OWN ARSENAL. CAN YOU TELL US WHY THE PRESIDENT DECIDED NOT TO TELL THIS? IS IT ON MORAL GROUNDS, LIKE SOME PEOPLE OBJECTED TO NAPALM? IS IT

BECAUSE OF THE TERRIBLE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF THIS WEAPON THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO CANCEL THE SALE AND THE REASSESSING IT IN OUR OWN ARSENAL?

MR. POWELL: I KNOW THAT I AM NOT QUALIFIED TO DISCUSS THE TECHNICAL DETAILS OF ARMAMENTS, BUT I THINK IT RELATED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

TO A GENERAL DESIRE TO LIMIT AND REDUCE THE SALE OF SOPH-
ISTICATED AND HIGHLY DESTRUCTIVE WEAPONS WORLDWIDE, AN
INCLINATION WHICH THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED OFTEN AS A
CANDIDATE AND HAS REAFFIRMED SINCE INAUGURATION DAY.

Q. DO WE HAVE A MONOPOLY ON THIS TYPE OF WEAPON?

MR. POWELL: THAT, I DON'T KNOW. AND ALSO TO HIS FEEL-
ING THAT A DECISION NOT TO SELL THESE WEAPONS WAS NOT IN
ANY WAY CONSISTENT WITH HIS ALSO OFTEN REPEATED COMMITMENT
TO THE SECURITY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

Q. JODY, DID VANCE INFORM THE PRESIDENT --

MR. POWELL: I THINK THERE IS SOME LOGIC IN THE INTER-
CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO POINTS, THAT OUR REASSESSING
THE NEED FOR THE WEAPONS HERE IN THIS COMMUNITY AND AS
PART OF OUR OWN ARSENAL, A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THAT
POINT AND THAT FEELING, AND A DECISION AS TO WHETHER THEY
WERE IN FACT NECESSARY TO THE SECURITY OF OTHER NATIONS.

Q. HAS HE DISCUSSED THE MATTER OF RESTRAINT IN SELLING
SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS WITH AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.

Q. JODY, DID VANCE INFORM THE PRESIDENT OF ANY --

MR. POWELL: I AM SURE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE VERY WELL
AWARE OF HIS FEELINGS IN THAT REGARD. TO WHAT EXTENT

IT MAY HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED WITH HIM PRIVATELY AND AT
WHAT LENGTH, I DON'T KNOW.

Q. ARE THEY AWARE OF THIS NONSALE AS AN EXAMPLE OF
THAT RESTRAINT?
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

MR. POWELL: I AM SURE THEY WILL BE AS SOON AS YOU
PEOPLE FILE. BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO IMPLY THAT THIS
DECISION WAS DISCUSSED WITH THE SOVIETS.

Q. DID VANCE TELL THE PRESIDENT WHAT REACTION HE MET--
HE, VANCE -- IN ISRAEL, WHEN HE TOLD THE GOVERNMENT WHAT
WE ARE DOING?

MR. POWELL: IF HE DID, THE PRESIDENT DID NOT RELATE
IT SUFFICIENTLY TO ME WHERE I WOULD BE ABLE TO COMMENT.

Q. YOU MENTIONED M-60'S. DIDN'T PRESIDENT
CARTER, DURING THE CAMPAIGN, CRITICIZE THEN PRESIDENT

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

FORD FOR NOT SUPPORTING OR NOT FAVORING ENOUGH MILITARY SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL?

MR. POWELL: I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY SPECIFIC CRITICISM TO THAT POINT. I DO KNOW THAT DURING THE CAMPAIGN HE TALKED AT LEAST TO THE POINT OF THESE PARTICULAR WEAPONS. I DO KNOW THAT HE DID TALK ABOUT SORT OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE VERY WELL-PUBLICIZED -- I FORGET THE DIPLOMATIC TERM THAT WAS USED --

Q. REASSESSMENT?

MR. POWELL: REASSESSMENT OF OUR POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WHICH RELATED TO NOT A QUESTION OF A FEW BOMBS BUT TO A WHOLE ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL, OR IT WAS SO INTERPRETED.

Q. JODY, ALL YOU MENTIONED AS CONTINUING WERE THE SALES OF M-60'S AND ARTILLERY PIECES. WASN'T THERE ALSO A PENDING REQUEST -- MAYBE JERRY SCHECTER KNOWS -- FOR SO-CALLED SMART BOMBS?

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 07 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

MR. POWELL: I AM NOT AWARE OF THAT. THERE WERE QUES-TIONS ABOUT, OR THERE WERE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE FORWARD LOOKING INFRARED RADAR SYSTEM OF FLIR. THAT REQUEST FOR THE POSSIBLE SALE IS UNDER VERY ACTIVE CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION OF A PRIMARILY TECHNICAL NATURE, I UNDERSTAND, WITH THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT.

Q. JODY, YOU SAY THIS CBU-72 IS NOT ALL THAT SOPH-ISTICATED, BUT THE ISRAELIS OBVIOUSLY WANT SOMETHING TO DEAL WITH MISSILE SITES LIKE THEY HAD PROBLEMS WITH IN 73. WASN'T THAT THE CASE, JERRY, THAT THEY WERE ASKING FOR EITHER TELEVISION OR RADIO-GUIDED BOMBS LIKE WE USED IN VIETNAM?

MR. SCHECTER: NOT IN THIS PACKAGE.

Q. WAS IT A SEPARATE PACKAGE?

MR. SCHECTER: I DON'T KNOW. I WOULD HAVE TO FIND OUT. MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THEY HAVE SMART BOMBS.

MR. POWELL: DON'T HOLD US TO THAT. I WAS AFRAID TO SAY IT BUT THAT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING,TOO.

Q. JODY, QUITE APART FROM THE MERIT OR DEMERITS OF THIS PARTICULAR DECISION, WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT THIS ADMINISTRATION'S SENSE OF OBLIGATION TO FULFILL THE COMMITMENTS OF PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS? DO

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

WE FEEL OBLIGATED TO FILL THEM?

MR. POWELL: THERE IS A DESIRE, CERTAINLY, ON THE PART OF THIS ADMINISTRATION TO PROVIDE AS MUCH CONTINUITY AS IS POSSIBLE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER NATIONS. AND THAT, OF COURSE, HAS TO BE BALANCED BY THE RIGHT AND INDEED THE OBLIGATION TO REVIEW A DECISION MADE LATE IN A PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION THAT WAS THE SUBJECT OF A GREAT

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 08 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

DEAL OF CONTROVERSY AND DIFFERENCE OF OPINION WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION. I DON'T KNOW THAT YOU CAN ENUNCIATE ANY HARD AND FAST RULE - ABOUT CONTINUITY. IT IS CERTAINLY IMPORTANT AND THAT IMPORTANCE IS WELL-RECOGNIZED BY THIS ADMINISTRATION.

BUT I CANNOT IMAGINE ANY ADMINISTRATION VOWING THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THEY EVER CHANGE OR ALTER SOMETHING THAT HAD BEEN DONE IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN POLICY BY THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION.

Q. JODY, HAS THE PRESIDENT ORDERED A REASSESSMENT OF ANY OTHER WEAPONS IN OUR ARSENAL, AND WHETHER THEY ARE NECESSARY, BESIDES THE CONCUSSION BOMB?

MR. POWELL: I CAN'T ANSWER THAT. I AM SURE THERE ARE CONTINUAL ASSESSMENTS AND REASSESSMENTS AND STUDIES, AND SO FORTH, GOING ON ABOUT ALL SORTS OF WEAPONS. BUT I DON'T KNOW.

Q. DOES HE FEEL THAT THIS PARTICULAR WEAPON MAY BE SUPERFLUOUS, THAT WE DON'T NEED IT?

MR. POWELL: THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT, TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY ARE. I AM NOT SURE THIS ONE WAS ORDERED BY HIM. YOU MIGHT CHECK WITH THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT ON THAT. BUT I THINK IT MAY HAVE BEEN ON THE WAY IN ANY CASE.

Q. ARE THERE ANY OTHER PENDING ARMS SALES AGREEMENTS WHICH ARE BEING REVIEWED AS THIS ONE WAS?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T KNOW.

DO YOU KNOW?

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 09 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

MR. SCHECTER: I DON'T KNOW.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Q. JODY, GETTING BACK TO JOE KRAFT'S QUESTION, WHETHER OR NOT THIS WAS DISCUSSED WITH THE RUSSIANS, DOES THE PRESIDENT EXPECT THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL SEE THIS AS A STEP OF RESTRAINT; THAT IS, NOT TELLING IT TO THE ISRAELIS AND REVIEWING OUR OWN POSSESSION OF CONCUSSION BOMBS?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE EXPECTS. I CERTAINLY CAN'T PREDICT HOW THE SOVIET UNION WILL SEE THIS. BUT I WOULD CERTAINLY WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE DECISION IN THIS MATTER WAS MADE ON ITS OWN MERITS AND THE QUESTION WAS NOT SOME SORT OF BARGAINING CHIP IN THE SOVIET.

Q. IS IT NOT MEANT AS A SIGNAL THEN TO THE KREMLIN?

MR. POWELL; AS I SAID, IT WAS MADE ON ITS OWN MERITS AND NOT AS AN ATTEMPT TO USE IT AS A BARGAINING CHIP.

Q. JODY, WAS THERE ANY REACTION FROM THEM, THOUGH?

MR. POWELL:WELL, SINCE IT HAS ONLY BEEN ANNOUNCED FIVE MINUTES AGO, I DOUBT THAT EVEN THE SOVIETS HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO REACT TO IT.

Q. WHEN THE STATE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED IT WAS TURNING DOWN THE SALE OF THE FLIRS TO ECUADOR, IT WAS ALSO ANNOUN-CED THAT THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PACKAGE FOR ISRAEL WAS BEING INCREASED. AND NOW THAT YOU ARE ANNOUNCING THE REFUSAL TO SELL THE CONCUSSION BOMBS TO ISRAEL YOU HAVE ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT A PART OF ANOTHER MILITARY PACKAGE

MR. POWELL: NO. AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT IS THE SAME PACKAGE.
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Q. WELL, WHAT I AM SAYING IS IN BOTH ANNOUNCEMENTS YOU HAD SOMETHING IN IT FOR ISRAEL AND SOMETHING OUT OF IT FOR ISRAEL. I AM WONDERING, IS IT COINCIDENTAL OR IS THIS SOME SORT OF A PAD YOU ARE PUTTING IN?

MR. POWELL: I THINK IT IS PROBABLY THE NATURE OF LIFE ON THIS EARTH, THAT IN MOST COMPLEX SITUATIONS THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT PEOPLE FIND FAVORABLE AND SOME THINGS THAT THEY DON'T.

Q. JODY, IN HIS TALKS WITH THE ISRAELIS YESTERDAY, DID THEY BRING UP THIS QUESTION OF -- DID THE ISRAELIS BRING UP THE QUESTION OF THE COMMITMENT WHICH YOU HAVE JUST DEALT WITH IN GENERAL TERMS? DID THEY TALK ABOUT A COMMITMENT WHICH THEY RELIED ON STEMMING FROM THE PREVIOUS ADMINSITRATION?

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

MR. POWELL: I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA. I CAN'T TELL YOU
THE NATURE OF THE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THEM BECAUSE I DON'T
KNOW.

Q. I SEE.

MR. SCHECTER: ADAM, IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION, THE
PRESIDENT HAS SAID THAT HE IS GOING TO REVIEW ALL ARMS
SALES, SO THAT IN THAT SENSE THERE IS GOING TO BE A GEN-
ERAL REVIEW. BUT I DON'T KNOW ANY SPECIFIC TIMETABLE FOR
SPECIFIC REQUESTS AT THIS POINT.

Q. CAN WE ASSUME, JODY, THAT THIS PACKAGE CONSISTED
OF CONCUSSION BOMBS, TANKS AND HOWITZERS, AND THAT WAS ALL?

MR. POWELL: AND FLIR. THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING, I
THINK YOU CAN CHECK.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 11 STATE 037508 TOSEC 020107

Q. I WILL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT.

Q. THE FLIR IS STILL UNDER DISCUSSION, IS THAT CORRECT?

MR. POWELL: THAT IS RIGHT. THE FLIR IS UNDER ACTIVE
CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND
ISRAEL. THE DISCUSSIONS RELATING, AS I SAID EARLIER,
PRIMARILY TO TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS, TO THE BEST OF
MY KNOWLEDGE.

Q. WHAT IS A FLIR?
MR. POWELL: FLIR IS A FORWARD LOOKING INFRARED RADAR
Q. THE ISRAELIS HAVE SAID THAT THEY ARE GOING TO
APPEAL TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO RECONSIDER, OR AT LEAST
TO THE ADMINISTRATION, TO RECONSIDER THE DECISION NOT TO
ALLOW THE SALE OF FLIRS TO ECUADOR. IS THE DECISION FINAL
OR IS IT GOING TO BE REASSESSED?

MR. POWELL: I GUESS IT WOULD HAVE TO BE. I DON'T
KNOW. I ASSUME THAT THE DECISION WAS MADE.

MR. SCHECTER: I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY HAVE DONE THIS
OR NOT AT THIS POINT.

Q. WHETHER THEY HAVE ASKED TO REASSESS? THE ISRAELIS
SAID THEY HAVE ASKED FOR REASSESSMENT.

MR. POWELL: I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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22 May 2009
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